University College Of The North

Recommendations and Action Plan

Report of the Consultation on Post-Secondary Education in Northern Manitoba
March 2003

TABLE of CONTENTS

Letter to the Minister

Introduction 1

Consultation Process 2

Key Issues
- Principles and Mission 3
- Programming 4
- Regional Coverage 10
- Facilities 14

Action Plan 18

Time Frame 22

Conclusion 23

Recommendations Summary 24

Appendix A 28

Appendix B 35

Introduction

What follows are a series of recommendations designed to provide direction to those who will shape the University College of the North (UCN). These recommendations flow from what we heard from the people during our public consultations in the northern Manitoba. In addition, a number of briefs/letters were submitted and meetings were held with faculty and northern students at the University of Manitoba and the University of Brandon. We also met with organizations such as Council of Presidents of Universities of Manitoba, Inter-universities North Program Executive Committee, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Manitoba Hydro and Frontier School Division. Much valuable information was gathered as we were welcomed into coffee shops, schools and First Nations Offices in the communities.

As we began to digest the results of our consultations, it became clear that the task of creating the University College of the North is immense yet very exciting. In light of this, we thought the best approach would be to lay out an action plan for the orderly development of a new institution. It is our hope that this plan forms the foundation from which a concrete direction can be taken to create a sustainable post-secondary presence in the North. Above all, the institution must be carefully formed to play an integral role in addressing the goals and aspirations of Manitoba's northern peoples.

Consultations on "Post-secondary Education in Northern Manitoba" were conducted during September through December, 2002. The consultation team consisted of Verna J. Kirkness, who facilitated the sessions and the secretariat staff Curtis Nordman and Jeff Kelly of Manitoba Advanced Education and Training, and LaVina Gillespie, a consultant with Manitoba Education and Youth. The purpose of the consultation was to seek public feedback using a specially prepared discussion document, *Post-Secondary Education in Northern Manitoba* as a basis for discussion. (see Appendix A)

Twelve communities representative of the North were visited. Of the twelve, nine were First Nations communities. To broaden the consultation ten additional First Nations communities sent delegates to consultation sites in order to ensure that voices from the entire region were heard. Afternoon and evening meetings were held at a number of sites. (see Appendix B)

Minister of Advanced Education
and Training
156 Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 0V8

Dear Minister:

I thank you for the opportunity of connecting me once again with the people of northern Manitoba. It was a pleasure to witness the enthusiasm and anticipation with which they welcomed your interest in taking the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak's vision of a University College of the North from debate to action.

When you first asked me to conduct this consultation I was impressed with your conviction that it was time for action. As the consultation unfolded, I became more and more convinced that this was the case. Currently, in many Aboriginal communities, thirty-five percent of the population is in school and the birth rate is continuing to escalate. This is reason enough to make higher education more readily accessible in the north.

While I am mindful of this urgency, I believe it is imperative that we not seek a "quick fix". What is to be established is not merely to address current needs but to put in place a higher education system that will provide for future generations of northern peoples. Our Aboriginal Elders remind us to look, at least, seven generations ahead. As you mentioned in your message, "the realities of northern Manitoba…are sufficiently distinctive to demand a new approach". Time will be needed to create a new and unique model of education to truly meet the needs of the people of northern Manitoba and the northern peoples must be the architects.

Having said that, it is important that steps be taken by the Government of Manitoba to show good faith by taking immediate action to enact legislation creating the framework for a higher education institution in northern Manitoba.

The report reflects what was presented to us at the consultation sessions and through written briefs and letters. Recommendations and an Action Plan are provided for your consideration. In moving from vision to a plan of action we have tried to respect the need to allow northerners to give final shape to the institution that will serve them. We think of the recommendations as something akin to terms of reference that will assist those who will actually create the new institution.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Doris Young, Don Robertson, Lorne Keeper and Peter Geller who provided helpful comments to the final draft of my report that have strengthened the case for a University College for the North. However, as is always the case, final responsibility for this report lies with its author.

Respectfully submitted,

Verna J. Kirkness

In addition to the public meetings, the consultation team benefited from the opportunity to tour the various communities. This usually included visiting First Nations Offices, schools, adult education facilities, healing centres and Northern Stores. As a result, the team was able to capture the diversity and needs of the North beyond that which the consultation sessions alone would have provided.

The Consultation Process

Post-Secondary Education in Northern Manitoba was the title of the working document prepared for the consultation sessions. The paper attempted to probe the key issues contained in the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak proposal: *University College of the North: A Vision for Our Future (2000).*

> ***Our identity of who we are as a people will be validated by our languages, our spirituality and our tradition of Oral histories.***
>
> ***William Dumas***

Given the demographic reality of the north, the importance of Aboriginal cultures, Aboriginal leadership, staffing and programming were clearly of supreme importance to the people. As such, there was widespread agreement with the proposed principles, mission statement, and directions in governance, staffing and the establishment of the Centre of Aboriginal Studies and Research.

The following key issues concerning principles, mission, governance and staffing are provided as a guide to those who will be directly involved in creating the institution.

Key Issue: Principles and Mission

Principles

a) That it be learner-centred – that is to say that it will place the interests of the students above all others in order to support their growth through life's journey

b) That it be characterized by a culture of respect, openness, inclusiveness and tolerance

c) That it reflect the Aboriginal reality and cultural diversity of the North

d) That it be dedicated to community and northern development in the widest sense: cultural, economic and environmental; and

e) That it be regionally and community based, adopting innovative curriculum design and delivery to serve a vast territory

Mission

The new institution is dedicated to providing lifelong learning opportunities that are consistent with living in northern Manitoba. It will embody the cultural values and traditions of Aboriginal people and celebrate the cultural diversity of the North. The institution is dedicated to ensuring that Aboriginal and northern peoples are provided with a wide array of programs that will give them the credentials required to participate fully in the social, economic, political and educational advancement of their people and communities.

Governance and Staffing

a) There will be an Aboriginal majority on its Board of Governors

b) It will be a flattened organization to avoid a hierarchical model and to facilitate human networking based on the need to focus and coordinate rather than command and control. Tribal college and other governance models need to be researched.

c) Staffing will reflect the cultural composition of its student body

The majority of the post-secondary students in the north is Aboriginal and growing. IUN reports that 80% of their students are Aboriginal, a high percentage of the students in BUNTEP are Aboriginal, at KCC's Thompson campus, the Aboriginal student population is 71%. In most Aboriginal communities anywhere from 33% to 50% of their population is less than 18 years of age.

The staff must reflect the clientele.

Sharon McKay

In order for the faculty and staff to reflect the cultural composition of the student body, steps will have to be taken to fast track training of Aboriginal people to meet this need. One suggestion put forward is to form a cohort of northern Aboriginal Master's graduates willing to take their Ph.D.'s at a recognized university. There are models of cohorts at other universities that have very effectively used this approach. Critical to the success of these cohorts is funding for the participating students. A similar effort should be made to provide instructors for the college level.

1. **It is recommended that provision be made to enable northern Aboriginal people to obtain doctoral degrees with consideration for appropriate financial assistance.**

Key Issue: Programming

It is through programming that the special nature of the UCN will reveal itself. This is where we will find the blend of university and college programs that will generate the synergy that will make the institution more than a university or a college. The programming objectives of the institution are threefold.

First, it is through programming that the UCN will embed Aboriginal culture and values to serve a population that is primarily Aboriginal. Second, the UCN to a large extent will co-ordinate, absorb and offer new programs unique to the region. And third, it is through programming that UCN will become an institution capable of advancing economic development through the North.

Vehicle to Express the Cultural Aspirations and Identity of Aboriginal and Northern Peoples

In order for UCN to be the post-secondary institution that expresses the cultural aspirations and identity of northern Aboriginal peoples, it will require an organization within it that devotes all its energies to this end. Also included in expressing the cultural aspirations and identity would be to legitimatize UCN with its own specialized Aboriginal Institutes and degree granting powers.

2. It is recommended that a Centre for Aboriginal Studies and Research be established

> ***The Centre for Aboriginal Studies and Research will be what sets UCN apart from any other institution in the province***
>
> ***Peter Geller***

The Centre for Aboriginal Studies and Research is the means to engaging a new approach to higher education. The trend has typically been to inject some form of Aboriginal culture into the curriculum, either by adapting or supplementing the existing curriculum. By making Aboriginal Studies the foundation of learning in the north and embedding Aboriginal knowledge throughout the curriculum, the respect and relevance currently missing will drastically change the meaning of northern education.

The Centre will be available to all northern students. As non-Aboriginal people learn about Aboriginal histories, cultures and values, a better understanding will emerge. Jamake Highwater observed that "The greatest distance between people is not space but culture". In support of this notion, a recent report of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation entitled ***Learning about Walking in Beauty: Placing Aboriginal Perspectives in Canadian Classrooms***[1] found that non-Aboriginal students want "curricula to present Aboriginal histories and cultures honestly and respectfully" to all students.

[1] Full report can be obtained from the Canadian Race Relations website at the following address: www.crr.ca/EN/Publications/ResearchReports/LearningAboutWalking/ePub_LAW20021115_report_highlights.htm

Such a Centre will be designed to provide the focus of all programming. Courses pertaining to the history, traditions, colonization, socialization, resistance, revitalization, world-view, languages and contemporary issues, of the northern Aboriginal people of Manitoba and Indigenous peoples throughout the world, will be housed in the Centre. Students can draw on these courses to attain the necessary background to their respective fields of study.

Aboriginal students want to build on their cultural knowledge. Contemporary and Traditional knowledge must be taught.

Charlotte Ross

That is, students in teaching, nursing, social work, science, arts, etc., can select from this array of courses to form the foundation required for their degree programs. Courses emanating from the Centre will also be available to students in technical/vocational programs. Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal technical and trades people would benefit greatly from Aboriginal cultural courses included in their programming.

The goal is to establish an institution in Northern Manitoba that will provide an inclusive range of credible, accessible and attainable post secondary opportunities to Aboriginal and northern residents.

Agnes Grant

The Centre will also be a vehicle for providing short courses, seminars and conferences. These might include such topics as: administering a Band School, training for School Board members, issues dealing with the law, health, self-government, economic development, and the environment.

The Centre would house the main library for the new institution. Its holdings would contain titles relevant to Aboriginal and northern studies. It would provide its resources to the community-based centres.

Finally, it would be the focal point for Aboriginal/northern research projects. It would identify and promote research that would extend the frontiers of knowledge for the benefit of all northern people (for example, resource management, environmental protection, service delivery, self-government). The research agenda would be controlled and owned by the people of the north.

3. **It is recommended that Institutes in the areas of Aboriginal Justice, Aboriginal Languages and Aboriginal Fine Arts to further address issues of concern to northern residents be established.**

We heard frequently throughout our consultations of the importance of sustaining the languages of Northern Aboriginal peoples. Through the Centre, UCN could house an institute mandated to the teaching and preserving of Aboriginal languages, thereby safeguarding the crucial link between language and culture.

The same model would also apply to Aboriginal Institutes in Justice and Fine Arts, both areas of tremendous importance to the Aboriginal people of the region.

There was considerably more debate in the areas of programming related to degree offering, facilities and regional coverage. The discussion paper presented a hybrid of home and host programs. The home programs referred to those types of programs that would be offered directly by UCN. These included technical and vocational training programs resulting from the absorption of Keewatin Community College into UCN, as well as new programs leading, in the short term, to associate degrees in arts, science, and general studies. The associate degrees would recognize the equivalent of two years of university study. Other home programs suggested were the Centre for Aboriginal Studies and Research, Aboriginal Institutes and academic preparation programs.

> ***We cannot run the risk of being legitimized by others; we can only be legitimized by ourselves. Our goal must be clear…our own, full degree granting institution, right away.***
>
> ***Donna Carriere***

There appeared to be a general assumption that KCC would be absorbed under the UCN and that its efforts toward establishing centres in communities would continue.

What captured the most attention was the suggestion of an associate degree. There was overwhelming rejection of an associate degree. The people of northern Manitoba and, indeed, those faculty members from institutions currently serving the north want the UCN to be a full degree-granting institution.

While calling for full degrees, there was an understanding that it would take time to institute the scale of courses necessary and that, in the interim, UCN would enter into partnership arrangements with existing universities. The need for UCN to offer Masters degrees was also raised.

4. **It is recommended that legislation be enacted to make UCN a full degree granting institution. It is further recommended that UCN be empowered to grant diplomas and certificates.**

At least one Bachelor's degree be offered at the outset, in all likelihood this would be a BA in Aboriginal Studies.

5. **It is recommended that partnerships with other institutions be explored to expand offerings.**

Coordination of Post-Secondary Education in the North

There are currently several post-secondary programs available to northern learners. The University of Manitoba and Brandon University offer professional programs. U of M offers Social Work and Nursing, while BU offers two education programs, Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program and Program for the Education of Native Teachers.

Post-secondary education in the traditional face-to-face mode and through less traditional learning technologies are also available to northern learners at the undergraduate level, through Inter-Universities North and Campus Manitoba. KCC, as the only permanent post-secondary institution in the north, provides technical/vocational programs and is responsible for administering IUN. Technical/vocational programs are also provided to northerners through Red River College.

These institutions provide a valuable service to the people of the north. Without them attaining a post-secondary education in the north would be difficult. Concerns were expressed over duplication, lack of program co-ordination and the detrimental effect this has on students. Given this great effort by the existing institutions to serve the north, it places the onus on UCN to coordinate, expand and improve programming and services already available. Above all, UCN cannot provide less that what is already provided.

6. **It is recommended that UCN coordinate all post-secondary education in the North by:**

a) **Absorbing the technical/vocational and IUN programming offered by Keewatin Community College and making the changes required for program and administrative compliance with UCN's principles and mission.**

b) **Ensuring that the partners in joint degrees comply with the principles and mission of UCN**

c) **And by, participating as a full member of Campus Manitoba**

It's worth mentioning that Campus Manitoba is the provincial provider of post-secondary distance education involving all Manitoba post-secondary institutions. As a member of CM each institution offers specific courses from its programs via distributed learning. Each student registering on CM selects the institution from which he/she wishes to graduate. CM itself is simply the delivery mechanism.

When UCN becomes a member of CM it could offer specialized Aboriginal programming. Therefore, there is the potential for all Manitoba students to benefit from the expertise of UCN.

Vehicle for expressing and addressing the economic aspirations and development of the North

Throughout the consultation we heard from industry and economic development agencies throughout the north. These organizations emphasized the need for the UCN to offer programs crucial to supporting and sustaining the economic and social development of the region.

Strengthening and expanding the technical/vocational offerings now available in the north will enable the UCN to produce the capacity for the growing labour market demands that accompany economic development projects, i.e. those being undertaken in the area of hydroelectricity.

> ***Education plays a large role in the impact of economic development and that the relationship between the two is critical to the sustainability of community based programs and services.***
>
> ***North Central Development***

7. **It is recommended, that UCN be dedicated to a labour market strategy that fosters economic growth through:**

a) **The development of college diplomas and certificates that can provide entry-level candidates to support the labour market needs of the region. These programs should be designed to articulate to degree programs that can be delivered through flexible means so that full professional accreditation can be secured while employed**

b) **The development of Joint Degree programs with other post-secondary institutions to offer applied degrees**

c) **The development of an Arts and Sciences program that focuses upon teachable subjects in order to support the development of northern trained teachers [this program will supplement the Joint Bachelor of Education Degree with Brandon university]**

It was apparent that High School teachers were in demand especially in math and science areas in First Nations Schools. This last recommendation is essential if the deficiencies identified in the secondary school system in the North are to be addressed.

Key Issue: Regional Coverage

Perhaps the greatest challenge that the UCN will face will be to provide meaningful service to the 80,000 people who are unevenly distributed over the 200,000 square miles of northern Manitoba. Not unreasonably, most locations consulted favoured community-based delivery in the form of a community learning centre.

Indeed, participants were passionate in putting forward their case, citing example after example of the kinds of pressures that militate against success for students studying away from home in the south. There were, however, voices that indicated regional programming would be acceptable.

> ***Our children feel at home in Thompson, it is the north.***
>
> ***Alvin Grieves***

Regional Centres: UCN Thompson and UCN The Pas

Thompson and The Pas are the two largest urban centres in northern Manitoba. Both locations will be able to support a wide range of programming and can constitute hubs for the logistical support of the community-based centres, which will be elaborated on further later in the document.

In examining the roles of UCN Thompson and UCN The Pas, the consultation team heard a number of views. At one extreme, the locations were viewed as major campuses in traditional educational terms. At the other end of the spectrum, participants thought of them as service centres that might house faculty and services to support activities at the community-based centres while providing programming to their local catchments. There were also those who advocated that the regional centres specialize, with UCN Thompson focusing upon university programming and UCN The Pas dedicating itself to technical/vocational training.

In 2000-2001 IUN instituted a first year full time university program in Thompson. It also provides the arts/science electives for the Northern Social Work Program and the Bachelor of Nursing Program. As such, Thompson has established itself as the academic centre. On the other hand, Keewatin Community College with its main campus in The Pas is well known to the people of northern Manitoba as the technical/vocational centre. The precedent has been set.

8. **It is recommended that, while UCN Thompson may be primarily an academic centre and UCN The Pas may be primarily a technical centre, the principle of "reasonable duplication" should be adopted to ensure that programming in theses two major locations is as broad as possible.**

This is essential given the population bases of these cities and the fact that significant numbers of northern students are likely to want to study in the larger milieu. What this may mean in practice is that, while academic staff may be based in Thompson, academic programming, enabled through learning technologies, will be offered in both locations. Similarly, certificates and diplomas currently offered in both locations will continue to be offered as demand warrants.

The operating principle here is to increase programming in both locations while creating a community of like-minded instructors in each.

UCN inherits from KCC Regional Centres in The Pas and Thompson and a series community-based centres at Flin Flon, Churchill, Swan River, Pimicikamak (Cross Lake), Tataskweyak (Split Lake), Nisichawayasihk (Nelson House) and Chemawawin (Easterville). KCC plans on expanding its partnerships with First Nations by negotiating community-based centres in Pukatawagan, Norway House and Island Lake, with the expectation that all of these locations will form the initial community-based delivery network for the UCN.

9. It is recommended that the existing network of regional and community centres inherited from KCC form the basis of UCN's regional coverage strategy

KCC's approach to delivery has, over the last number of years, been the expansion of community-based programming. This network, therefore, provides a point of departure for UCN that is consistent with the general direction outlined above.

Community-Based Centres

What is typically found in the current community-based centres are preparatory and first year college and university courses. Students are primarily pursuing credentials in teaching, social work and nursing. Typical technical/vocational training at community-based centres includes programs in Early Childhood Education, Office Administration, Health Care Aide and traditional trades such as carpentry, power mechanics, plumbing etc.

> ***Community based programming is irreplaceable. You cannot accomplish the same depth of understanding of life in a community when a program is based in an institutional setting....***
>
> ***Mary Courtnay***

We heard of education and training needs in many other areas related to capacity building for their communities. As it is, many vital services are still required from the outside. For example, some communities do not have journeymen carpenters or plumbers and therefore have to obtain these services from either Thompson or a southern location, at great expense.

There are a significant number in each community who do not have the entrance requirements to enrol in post-secondary education. As well, many of the local high schools do not offer university entrance programming. The numbers are growing rapidly as the population continues to escalate in the north. It will be necessary to have a full scale offering of academic preparation at the outset. A number of communities are currently receiving academic preparation. It is therefore incumbent the UCN concentrate adequate resources on student success and retention services.

The community in conjunction with UCN will determine the specifics of programming in each centre.

10. Therefore, it is recommended at a minimum the following kinds of programs should be offered at community-based centres:

As a result of our inability to attract teachers to the north, our students are not adequately prepared for college or university.

Chief Bailey Colon

a) Basic academic preparation

b) Regular UCN programs on a rotated basis

c) Selected university courses on a face-to-face basis

d) A wide range of university courses UCN Thompson through interactive learning technologies

e) Joint degree programs on a rotated basis, e.g. B.Ed.

The foregoing will require the dedication of permanent staff to the Community Based Centres. In many cases individual staff will have to discharge a range of functions: administration, admissions and assessment, and technical support. Each centre is likely to have at minimum one upgrading instructor.

Ensuring Student Success

Whether it is the demand for community-based delivery or the development of culturally sensitive programming, there is one theme that underpins the vast majority of recommendations made in this report: the need to ensure student success. This will require a number of dedicated programs, and to that end,

11. It is recommended that UCN invest appropriate resources to support

a) Assessment Services designed to identify any impediments to learners achieving their goals

b) Academic Preparation to strengthen learners' skills and enhance graduation rates

c) Retention Services that can assist learners experiencing difficulty to maintain their progress

These services will be essential to support learners during their studies and to ensure that the significant investment being made in their education and training is brought to a satisfactory result.

Key Issue: Facilities

To shy away from bricks and mortar is to short change northerners.

Robert MacGillivray

In addressing facilities, the Consultation team asked what facilities were needed. In particular, we asked whether or not there were alternatives to major construction so that investments could be directed to funding programs as opposed to bricks and mortar. In answering these questions, the consultation team received mixed messages.

Participants at the Thompson consultation advocated strongly for the construction of a new campus in that city. Participants in other communities stressed the need for campus-like facilities in their locations. Many respondents argued for investments in both a new northern campus and community-based facilities.

It was clear that this was not an either or situation for the people. Rather, they saw the need for balanced investments in both bricks and mortar and programs.

Thompson Facility

As part of its deliberations, the consultation team visited KCC's facilities in Thompson. It was readily apparent that these facilities are inadequate for their current usage, and will be totally inappropriate for the needs of UCN.

Ideally, and without question a new campus would enhance opportunities for northern people. In fact, by keeping the regional centres at Thompson and The Pas, a loosely based network, we run the danger of perpetuating the fragmentation that currently exists in post-secondary education in the north. A campus in Thompson would not diminish the need for community-based centres or campus-like centres in other communities. Rather, it would be a recognizable setting that would make a positive statement for northern people and also be better able to serve outlying communities.

> ***A major research center will require those who know how to do the research....and most importantly how to link with members of the community to research what the communities believe should be studied.***
>
> ***Mary Courtnay***

The Centre of Aboriginal Studies and Research described in some detail earlier in this report could be the focal point, the heartbeat, if you will, of UCN. As such, there is a need to house the Centre in a place that would serve as a lightly unifying mother campus. As the academic centre, Thompson would be its logical home.

Further to this, It would demonstrate Government's commitment to higher education in the north and heed the sentiments of many northerners who say, "We are as deserving of new facilities as southerners".

Residences and sports facilities go hand in hand with a university.

Jessie Anderson

12.It is recommended that necessary investments in post-secondary facilities must be made in Thompson so that UCN can effectively discharge its responsibilities

Student accommodations were another facilities issue that arose with respect to Thompson. Many remote communities expressed a willingness to send students to study in Thompson. They pointed out, however, that the housing situation in Thompson was highly problematic. Housing costs are high and discriminatory practices are not uncommon. Residence requirements in Thompson will be determined by the level of decentralized services that UCN can provide to communities as UCN Thompson evolves into a major operation, its residence requirements will rise accordingly.

13.It is recommended that appropriate residence facilities must be considered as part of UCN Thompson

Growing the Community-Based Centres

Look at our success rate...95% of our teachers are BUNTEP graduates...trained in our community.

Councilor Garriock

Possibly, the strongest message we received throughout the consultation process was for community-based post-secondary education. We heard about the abysmal failure experienced when students were sent to the south to further their education. The challenge of relocation, being away from family, housing problems, racism encountered, brain drain was expressed over and over. However, it is worth noting that we did hear from a few students that they would like the opportunity to study outside the community, even if that meant going to Thompson. On the other hand, an account of the success rate of students in programs in their home communities was impressive. Our visit to home-based centres in Pimicikamak and Norway House were an example of how dynamic centres in familiar surroundings can be.

Keewatin Community College has seven such centres operating currently throughout the region. The college plans on expanding the network with an additional three centres in First Nations communities within the next two years. The Centres provided by the local band through a memorandum of understanding vary in size and quality.

> ***If we offered programming on our reserve they would come flooding back.***
>
> ***Charles Ballantyne***

We heard of more communities in need of community-based programming, which means the need for facilities will grow. In the process, it will be critical not to neglect small communities because they are small as they may well be in the greatest need of this service. Investments will vary from community to community according to their size, but it will be essential to meet the highly articulated demand for community-based delivery.

14. It is recommended that to support the level of service envisaged in a highly decentralized delivery system investments must be made for community-based facilities

Electronic Infrastructure

While there was little discussion on the delivery aspect of community-based education, face-to-face instruction as provided through IUN is likely the most effective method. It is clear that other methods will have to be utilized to serve the communities as well. Technological advances make this a viable option that may better be utilized at the third and fourth year levels of study. Indeed, learning technologies will be the means to providing not only the widest possible range of programming but also the glue that can hold a far-flung operation together. Research will be required to study all possible technological means as costs and effectiveness will vary.

> ***The black hole that exists in the north, in the area of technology must be addressed.***
>
> ***Rebecca Ross***

15. It is recommended that a comprehensive plan for the electronic integration of UCN be developed and supported in order to expand programming

The Role of the Federal Government

At virtually every location the consultation visited, questions were raised as to the role of the federal government in supporting UCN. Given Canada's responsibilities for the education of Aboriginal people and the fact that UCN will primarily serve Aboriginal people, the role of the federal government should be significant. Undoubtedly, the most effective way that Canada could support this important project is through investing in infrastructure:

16. It is recommended that Manitoba commence negotiations with the Government of Canada to secure financial support for the facilities and infrastructure required to make UCN a success

ACTION PLAN

Without exception each and every consultation session heard the same question: "When will this happen?" There is both skepticism and optimism about whether there will ever be a University College of the North. The skepticism arises out of, at least, fifteen years of discussion, numerous meetings, proposals and silence on the issue. One of the participants said she has all the letters, proposals, minutes of meetings from over the years in a binder that is now three inches thick. The northern people have been patient for a very long time. That amazing quality is what nurtures the optimism they are still able to exhibit.

Interestingly enough, our consultation was not about whether there should be a University College of the North but rather what form it should take and how we deal with the challenges of the north. It is not easy to get answers to these difficult questions. The facts are before us; the distance is immense and the population is small. This is the way it is and it is the notion of fairness and vision that demands that the Government move on with the plan. With 1500 children in a population of 4500 in nursery to grade twelve in one community, 1000 out of 3000 in another, it is essential to provide the educational opportunities that will make a positive difference in their lives and those of future generations.

The task ahead is nothing short of daunting. And what must be avoided above all else is looking for a quick fix. What is put in place now must stand the test of time and not have to be undone or revamped in future years. The development must be carefully planned or we run the risk of simply emulating a system that has not adequately met the needs of Aboriginal and northern peoples. That fact must remain uppermost in the minds of those who will be charged with the challenge of creating the new institution.

The University College of the North must cut out the constant starting over.

Sharon McKay

As is to be expected, the people of the north feel a sense of urgency and want to see concrete evidence that the University College of the North is, in fact, to become a reality. To this end, passing legislation to create the University College of the North as soon as possible would give the signal that this is a major turning point, the end of a long struggle to be recognized and the beginning of brighter things to come.

As a consultation team, we saw the next steps as crucial to developing a new approach to higher education. Our task was to set the direction based on the voices of the northern people. We have done that and only that. What has to be done now requires a "implementation" team of experienced, competent and dedicated northern people who will take this project to the next level.

As a matter of interest, we have assembled a list of Aboriginal people from northern Manitoba who currently hold graduate degrees. We have identified at least fifty. Many presently reside and work in the north. Their fields of study include education, business, resource management, social work, architecture, nursing, medicine, etc. Such a range of expertise could offer an interdisciplinary approach to higher education. This list provides a pool of potential members of an implementation team. As a first step, consideration should be given to bringing this group together to lend their expertise and experience to the assignments of the Implementation team. These include but are not restricted to the following:

a) obtaining the demographics of each community i.e., population, socio-economic status, educational profile including programs currently offered, employment opportunities
b) establishing academic preparation programs in communities

c) researching governance models that are flattened organizations to determine an appropriate model
d) studying various technological delivery models to ascertain the most efficient and cost- effective methods
e) studying northern industry for potential job market and involvement as partners with UCN
f) Developing curricula to meet industry demands
g) assessing the overall curriculum of KCC programs operating in the north to ensure they are in compliance with the principles and mission of UCN
h) developing the Centre for Aboriginal Studies and Research
i) developing the framework for the Aboriginal Justice, Languages and Fine Arts Institutes
j) identifying and organizing a cohort of Aboriginal Masters graduates interested in pursuing doctoral studies with a view to working at UCN
k) developing a Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal studies degree
l) developing joint degree programs with recognized institutions
m) developing transfer credit and articulation agreements

n) initiating a facilities plan
o) developing strategies to deal with significant bargaining issues
p) initiating the hiring process for a president
q) initiating a process to identify members for the governance structure
r) develop strategies to deal with significant bargaining issues that will arise from integrating operations organized by different unions

17. It is recommended that the Government of Manitoba in partnership with the Federal Government sponsor a Think-Tank of northern Manitoba Aboriginal graduates to solicit their expertise toward the tasks to be undertaken by the implementation team.

18. It is recommended that an Implementation team composed of 5 to 6 Aboriginal and northern expert representatives be appointed with the authority to strike ad hoc committees as required; that the time frame for the Implementation team be up to eighteen months (June 1/03 to November 30/04). These appointees should not be precluded from serving on the governance structure or from seeking the presidency of UCN.

The Implementation Team and the Five Year Strategic Plan

In order to move the project forward efficiently, the Implementation Team will be required to provide leadership in the short-term. Once a Board of Governors is in place then the Implementation Team can report to the Board.
In developing a Five-Year Strategic Plan, the Implementation Team will have to focus upon:

- Curriculum adjustment of all former KCC programs and degree programs operating in the North to ensure cultural and regional sensitivity :2003
- Establish Academic Preparation Programs in communities
- Recruitment, particularly of Academic Staff in order to meet the September 2004 deadline for delivery of Arts and Sciences programs
- Development of Centre for Aboriginal Studies and Research for September 2004
- Development of Joint Degree Programs with BU and UM
- Development of Transfer Credit and Articulation Agreements

- Roll Out of Learning Technologies Infrastructure to be operational for September 2004
- Aboriginal Justice Institute: 2003
- Aboriginal Languages Institute: 2004
- Aboriginal Fine Arts Institute: 2005

Provision should be made for a five-year review to commence in 2008. This review will be formative in nature, designed to measure progress and determine new directions for UCN. In particular, it should assess whether or not the time is right for expanding its degree- granting mandate.

TIMEFRAME

By Spring 2003

- Legislation should have been introduced to constitute UCN
- A Post-secondary education "think-tank" conference with northern Manitoba Aboriginal graduates should have been held
- Government should have commenced discussions with the Government of Canada regarding how it is willing and able to participate in the creation of UCN.

By June 2003

- An Implementation Team should be in place

By December 2003

- A Board of Governors should have been selected to begin to set policy directions and to oversee the work of the Implementation Team.

- The Aboriginal Justice Institute should be in place

By July 2004

- New President should be in place

By September 2004

- UCN should commence delivery of the first two years of Arts and Science and a Bachelor of Arts in Aboriginal Studies

    - The Centre for Aboriginal Studies and Research should be in place

CONCLUSION

In the brief time we had to consult with the people of northern Manitoba regarding the University College of the North we came to realize the great impact a northern post secondary institution can have on the vitality of not only northern Manitoba but on Manitoba as a whole. We also came to recognize the responsibility all Manitobans share in ensuring that the educational concerns and wishes of northern Manitobans are reflected in post-secondary programs.

We would like to thank those individuals and groups that made presentations during the formal public consultation process. We would also like to take this opportunity to urge further public participation in setting and achieving post-secondary goals and programs for the north.

It is clear that the impact of a changing society presents both unprecedented challenges and exciting opportunities. How well Manitobans respond to the changes recommended in this report will play a pivotal role in shaping not only the future of the University College of the North but in all of Manitoba as well.

Recommendations Summary:

Principles and Mission

1. **It is recommended that provision be made to enable northern Aboriginal people to obtain doctoral degrees with consideration for appropriate financial assistance.**

Programming

2. **It is recommended that a Centre for Aboriginal Studies and Research be established**

3. **It is recommended that Institutes in the areas of Aboriginal Justice, Aboriginal Languages and Aboriginal Fine Arts to further address issues of concern to northern residents be established.**

4. **It is recommended that legislation be enacted to make UCN a full degree granting institution. It is further recommended that UCN be empowered to grant diplomas and certificates.**

5. **It is recommended that partnerships with other institutions be explored to expand offerings.**

6. **It is recommended that UCN coordinate all post-secondary education in the North by:**

a) **Absorbing the technical/vocational and IUN programming offered by Keewatin Community College and making the changes required for program and administrative compliance with UCN's principles and mission.**

b) **Ensuring that the partners in joint degrees comply with the principles and mission of UCN**

c) **And by, participating as a full member of Campus Manitoba**

7. **It is recommended, that UCN be dedicated to a labour market strategy that fosters economic growth through:**

a) The development of college diplomas and certificates that can provide entry-level candidates to support the labour market needs of the region. These programs should be designed to articulate to degree programs that can be delivered through flexible means so that full professional accreditation can be secured while employed

b) The development of Joint Degree programs with other post-secondary institutions to offer applied degrees

c) The development of an Arts and Sciences program that focuses upon teachable subjects in order to support the development of northern trained teachers [this program will supplement the Joint Bachelor of Education Degree with Brandon university]

Regional Coverage

8. It is recommended that, while UCN Thompson may be primarily an academic centre and UCN The Pas may be primarily a techincal/vocational centre, the principle of reasonable duplication should be adopted to ensure that programming in theses two major locations is as broad as possible.

9. It is recommended that the existing network of regional and community centres inherited from KCC form the basis of UCN's regional coverage strategy

10. It is recommended at a minimum the following kinds of programs should be offered at community-based centres:

a) Basic academic preparation

b) Regular UCN programs on a rotated basis

c) Selected university courses on a face-to-face basis

d) A wide range of university courses UCN Thompson through interactive learning technologies

e) Joint degree programs on a rotated basis, e.g. B.Ed.

11.It is recommended that UCN invest appropriate resources to support

a) Assessment Services designed to identify any impediments to learners achieving their goals

b) Academic Preparation to strengthen learner's skills and enhance graduation rates

c) Retention Services that can assist learners experiencing difficulty to maintain their progress

Facilities

12.It is recommended that necessary investments in post-secondary facilities must be made in Thompson so that UCN can effectively discharge its responsibilities

13.It is recommended that appropriate residence facilities must be considered as part of UCN Thompson

14.It is recommended that to support the level of service envisaged in a highly decentralized delivery system investments must be made for community-based facilities

15.It is recommended that a comprehensive plan for the electronic integration of UCN be developed and supported in order to expand programming

16.It is recommended that Manitoba commence negotiations with the Government of Canada to secure financial support for the facilities and infrastructure required to make UCN a success

Action Plan

17.It is recommended that the Government of Manitoba in partnership with the Federal Government sponsor a conference of northern Manitoba Aboriginal graduates to solicit their expertise toward the tasks to be undertaken by the implementation team.

18. It is recommended that an Implementation team composed of 5-6 Aboriginal and northern expert representatives be appointed with the authority to strike ad hoc committees as required; that the time frame for the Implementation team be up to eighteen months (June 1/03 to November 30/04). These appointees should not be precluded from serving on the governance structure or from seeking the presidency of UCN.

Appendix A

Post-Secondary Education
In
Northern Manitoba

A Discussion Paper

Fall 2002

Message from the Minister

When I first read Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak's paper, *University College of the North: A Vision for Our Future*, I was struck by the fact that the debate over post-secondary services in northern Manitoba has been going on for almost 15 years. While I have no doubt debate will continue as we fashion our post-secondary policy for the North, it is equally clear that it is time for action.

How is it that we could have spent so long discussing this issue? Some point to a lack of political will, while others tell me the challenge of serving a small population scattered over some 200,000 square miles has caused decision-makers to hesitate. But, let's remember that this small group of people has disproportionately contributed to our provincial well-being through their harvesting of the immense hydroelectric, forest and mineral wealth of the North. Fairness demands that the impasse end, that we move forward with post-secondary services to our northern communities.

As we resume the debate with an emphasis upon action, we will have to grapple with the realities of northern Manitoba. These realities are sufficiently distinctive as to demand a new approach. To this end, we will need to go beyond our preconceptions of what constitutes a university or a college to create an institution that is both and more. Indeed, we need to create a change agent capable of transforming individuals and developing a vast region.

Perhaps by adopting a Cree name for the new institution, by using the language of the majority, we can signal a new educational model and, at the same time, celebrate the Aboriginal reality of northern Manitoba. From here, the process of embedding Aboriginal values and culture into an institution that will primarily serve Aboriginal Peoples can flow.

In taking us from debate to action we are fortunate to have a person of Professor Verna Kirkness' stature to guide us. Professor Kirkness brings a distinguished career devoted to furthering the cause of Aboriginal education to this task and I trust you will assist her by participating in the consultation process that I hope will place the government in a position to announce its plans early in the New Year.

Diane McGifford
Minister of Advanced Education

The Consultation Process

The consultation process is based on four key issues drawn from Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak's position paper, *University College of the North: A Vision for Our Future* [September, 2000 and viewable at www.gov.mb.ca/cei]. It is hoped that these key issues will generate an open and honest discussion that can inform government as it establishes its plans to create a new institution of higher learning in the North. The consultation team will tour widely in the North. But for those unable to attend a session, written or taped comments will be accepted. These comments can be submitted directly to Professor Verna Kirkness at either

By mail: c/o The College Expansion Initiative
1802-330 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 0C4

Electronically: cei@gov.mb.ca

Key Issue: Principles and Mission

The new institution needs to be grounded in principles that are meaningful to northerners. Do the following principles capture the essence of what we hope to achieve? What, if any, principles might be added?

- It will be learner-centred – That is to say it will place the interests of students above all others in order to support their growth through life's journey
- It will be characterized by a culture of respect, openness, inclusiveness, and tolerance
- It will reflect the Aboriginal reality and cultural diversity of the North
- It will be dedicated to community and northern development in the widest sense: cultural, economic, and environmental
- It will be regionally- and community-based, adopting innovative curriculum design and delivery to serve a vast territory

These principles should translate into a strong and proactive mission statement – a statement which might read:

The new institution is dedicated to providing lifelong learning opportunities that are consistent with living in northern Manitoba. It will embody the cultural values and traditions of Aboriginal people and celebrate the cultural diversity of the North. The new institution is dedicated to ensuring that Aboriginal and northern peoples are provided with a wide array of programs giving them the credentials required to participate fully in the social, economic, political and educational advancement of their people and communities.

Key Issue: Program Mix

The new northern institution is conceived as an educational hub that could act both as a home and as a host to a wide spectrum of programming. With sustainability as its ultimate goal, this model is intended to be dynamic and evolutionary. What follows below is a possible configuration of home and host programming. Does this mix provide a reasonable point of departure?

Home

These programs would be the sole jurisdiction of the new institution and will reflect Aboriginal and northern perspectives in their curriculum. These perspectives would provide the new institution with the defining features of its academic character.

- technical and vocational training resulting from the merger of Keewatin Community College into the new institution
- new university programs leading, in the short-term, to associate degrees in arts, science and general studies
- centre for Aboriginal studies and research[2]
- an Aboriginal languages institute
- an Aboriginal arts institute
- an Aboriginal justice institute – with provincial-wide responsibilities

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[2] The idea of a centre for Aboriginal studies and research is so central to this institution that it merits elaboration. The centre will be designed to provide the focus of all programming. Courses pertaining to the history, traditions, colonization, socialization, resistance, contemporary issues, world-view, languages, etc., of the northern Cree people in particular and Aboriginal people in general, will be housed in the centre. Students can draw on these courses to attain the necessary background to their particular field of study. That is, students in teaching, nursing, social work, science, and arts, for example, can all select from this array of courses to form part of their degree programs.

The centre would be the vehicle for providing short courses, seminars, and conferences. Examples of short courses are: administering a Band School, training for school board members, Aboriginal people and the law, health issues. Seminars may be designed for Chiefs and Councilors on self-governance or other issues requiring focussed study, seminars may be provided for non-Aboriginals who want to know more about Aboriginal cultural values and traditions. Conferences may be organized around northern economic issues.

The centre would house the main library that would contain titles relevant to Aboriginal and northern studies. It would provide its resources to the community centres on a loan basis.

The centre would be the focal point of Aboriginal and northern research projects. Scholarships might be offered to Aboriginal/northern graduate students who want to do research that would extend the knowledge of northern peoples. Other scholars interested in northern issues could find a welcome place at the centre.

Host

These programs would operate through partnerships with existing universities and colleges and would provide for the incorporation of Aboriginal and northern perspectives into the curriculum. Legislative changes will be required if joint degrees were to be the preferred vehicle.

Joint Degree Programs

- bachelor of arts and science could be a capstone program to the associate degrees suggested above. It would likely be delivered primarily though Inter-Universities North and Campus Manitoba and supported by the new institution's associate degree faculty who will act as tutors
- bachelor of education – in partnership with Brandon University
- bachelor of nursing – in partnership with the University of Manitoba
- bachelor of social work – in partnership with the University of Manitoba

Joint programming could be the most expedient and cost-effective way to co-ordinate these programs in the short-term. This solution would provide instant recognition and credibility to the new institutions endeavors. It would also reduce the strain that will be placed upon it as it expands to deliver new university programming at the first and second year levels, as it establishes the centre for Aboriginal studies, etc.

Key Issue: Regional Coverage

The new institution is conceived as regionally- and community based. Does the following distribution of sites, which will be inherited from Keewatin Community College, fulfil that commitment?

- Regional Campuses:
  - The Pas
  - Thompson
- Community Centres:
  - Churchill
  - Cross Lake
  - Easterville
  - Flin Flon
  - Split Lake
  - Swan River

- Proposed Community Centres:
    - Island Lake
    - Nelson House
    - Norway House
    - Pukatawagan

Questions:

How can technology be harnessed to bind together the regional centres and reduce the overall need for bricks and mortar?

Should the regional campuses be specialised? For example, should The Pas focus on trades and vocational training and Thompson on university training?

How should programs be distributed between the regional campuses and community centres? It is assumed that there should be as much decentralisation as possible. All sites, for example, should offer academic preparedness programs.[3] Some programs can be rotated. Others may need to be permanently sited.

What about the question of facilities? KCC's facilities in Thompson's are clearly inadequate. Are there alternatives to a major construction initiative?

Key Issue: Reflecting the Aboriginal reality and cultural diversity of the North

- *Governance*: there will be an Aboriginal majority on the board
- *Staffing*: will reflect the cultural composition of the student body
- *Programming*: will embody Aboriginal cultural values and tradition, e.g. through a centre for Aboriginal studies, through regionally focused programming designed to foster community development, and by building these items into agreements with other institutions to offer joint programs.

It has been suggested that adopting a Cree name may help enshrine Aboriginal cultural values and tradition in the new institution. Such a name would have to have certain attributes: it would need to be short, it would need to be easily pronounced by all northerners, and it should have significance.

[3] The new institution will inherit from Keewatin Community College academic preparation programs that have been strengthened and reconfigured to serve anticipated future needs. These programs take an integrated approach whereby upgrading activity blends directly into a learner's chosen diploma or degree path. Student services have also been enhanced to provide initial academic assessment and ongoing student support.

By way of illustration, the name *Wapan'ohk* has been forwarded with a view to stimulating debate on the name. The term literally means the Place of the Dawn, that is the East. Metaphorically, it translates as the Doorway to the Journey – a phrase generating a powerful image for learners.

After the Consultation

At the completion of the consultation process, recommendations will be submitted to the government. The government is expected to consider these recommendations early in the New Year and to announce its intentions shortly thereafter.

September 5, 2002

Appendix B

Consultation Itinerary

Community Consultations:

Date	Location	Participants from other Communities
September 19	Thompson	Shamattawa South Indian Lake Barren Lands/ Brochet Lac Brochet Tadoule Lake
September 20	Tataskweyak (Split Lake)	None

Date	Location	Participants from other Communities
October 1	St. Theresa Point	Wasagamach
October 2	Garden Hill	Red Sucker Lake

Date	Location	Participants from other Communities
October 8	Oxford House	God's River Gods Lake Narrows
October 9	Pimicikamak (Cross Lake)	None

Date	Location	Participants from other Communities
October 22	The Pas	None
October 23	Flin Flon	None

Date	Location	Participants from other Communities
October 29	Norway House	None

Date	Location	Participants from other Communities
November 4	Chemawawin (Easterville)	None
November 5	Grand Rapids	None
November 6	Nisichawayasihk (Nelson House)	Pukatawagen

Other Consultations:

Date	Location	Group
September 19	Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN)	Consultation with Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO)

Date	Location	Group
September 30	Winnipeg	Consultation with Council of Presidents of Universities in Manitoba (COPUM)

Date	Location	Group
October 11	Winnipeg	Consultation with Inter-Universities North Program Executive Committee (IUNPEC)

Date	Location	Group
November 12	Winnipeg	Consultation with Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC)

Date	Location	Group
November 13	Winnipeg	Consultation with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)

Date	Location	Group(s)
November 25	Winnipeg	Consultation with Administration and northern students of the University of Manitoba

Date	Location	Group(s)
December 2	Brandon	Consultation with Administration and northern students of Brandon University

Date	Location	Group
December 4	Winnipeg	Consultation with Manitoba Hydro

Date	Location	Group
December 16	Winnipeg	Consultation with Frontier School Division